

2014 Calgary Area May Species Count

Coordinated, and report compiled by Terry Poulton
Last corrected & updated Mar 31, 2015

This report is intended to be read with its companion, the Multi-year Chart (1979-2014), available also at the Nature Calgary website (Bird Study Group – Bird Count Results) - <http://www.naturecalgary.com> . This report is significantly shorter than that of the last few years and is intended to be used together with the 2013 report, where, count background and basics are found, which are not repeated here.

Last year's report contains comments on the trends in numbers of the species, particularly those that are much reduced in numbers compared with previous years or are relatively new to the area, and notes that the general increase since 1979 in many species is parallel to the increasing number of birders, routes covered and hours spent. A similar or more thorough analysis of this sort will have to wait for a future year.

The most important factor in any count is the participants. We achieved another new record for observers (119) this year. As always, the participants, all of them volunteers, were extremely dedicated and many put in long hours and covered great distances on sometimes messy routes to provide excellent coverage.

THANK YOU to everyone who participated in the 2014 May Species Count, and to those who offered helpful advice, and corrections, during the report preparation. The record number of observers includes participants from the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park, and the Society for Life Long Learning, who either accompanied Gus Yaki and other leaders on their routes or undertook their own routes for the first time. **SPECIAL THANKS** to **Gus Yaki** and to **Bob Lefebvre** and **Dan Arndt** for facilitating the participation of the new volunteers. Bob and Dan in particular also undertook certain routes within the city that would otherwise have not been covered. A few people volunteered from out of the blue; we hope to hear from you again next year. These are all very welcome new observers, some of them young people who will form the next generation of Calgary birders. And again, I note with great appreciation the ongoing participation of **Greg Wagner** since the first year of the count, which originated from a "Big Day" count that he undertook with Peter Allen in 1976.

Because of the increasing number of new participants in the last 3 years, most of whom are not yet ready to venture far afield, we attempted this year to improve our coverage of certain areas of the city that have become more nature-friendly and accessible. Essentially, we have more people, each of them gaining more experience, and better coverage of the count circle, and this is reflected in the distances covered, and the hours involved. In order to maintain continuity with reports from previous years and to make clear the contributions of various teams within the different areas, the newly covered areas are designated as "sub-areas" within or adjacent to previous designated routes (eg 5a associated with Area 5; multiple subareas recorded separately in Areas 8, 43, 36, with attempts to eliminate double-counting in the total numbers between adjacent areas), as detailed below where participation is listed. Additionally, it was possible to return to some of the traditional routes more than once in some cases; this increased the number of hours spent observing, but the numbers of individual species were not summed, to avoid double-counting. It will take further consideration to

deal with these matters in a more formal manner for future years, and for compiling "team/hour" numbers.

Other special cases this year included the continuing closure and lack of access to some of the river parks and pathways due to flood damage in 2013; and reports were not received for two areas outside of the city; perhaps for these reasons total bird and mileage numbers are not increased from recent years, while nevertheless quite respectable.

Further this year, I attempted to make it easier for the many participants who do not use Excel or easily compatible programs to report, which required more translation on my part and may not be advisable for future years. I agreed to find some of the reports on eBird or Albertabird to eliminate the observers' need for double reporting, but this has resulted in the loss of certain information items, particularly the names of participants where there were many in one team.

2014 Count Particulars

Weather:

Day 1: Temp. 10 (3 in mountains) to 20 °C

Wind speed: 0 (mostly) to 40 km/hr in pm. Wind direction: n/a

Precipitation: ___mostly nil, minor sprinkles/showers locally in pm

Comments: ___mostly sunny, calm; afternoon cloud

Day 2: Temp. 10 (3 in mountains) to 26 (on prairies) °C

Wind speed: 0 to 10 km/hr. Wind direction: N

Precipitation: _ mostly nil, short showers in pm locally

Comments: mostly sunny in am, dark and cloudy with light wind in pm

Team Distance/Hours: Total team mileage: **3792.94** km+; by vehicle **3535.80**; on foot **257.14** km

Total team hours: **406.47** hr+; by vehicle **205.08** hr; on foot **201.39** hr.

Number of Species: _____ **220**

Number of Birds: _____ **81636**

Bird Highlights, May 24-25:

-2 Surf Scoters at Glenmore Reservoir (reported in eBird).

-Second appearance of Clark's Grebe on the count (1 at Frank Lake, by Greg Wagner).

-Record number of White-faced Ibis (525).

-For the 4th consecutive year, low numbers of Ring-billed Gull (64).

-3 Sabine's Gull (note that 500-600 were observed at Weed Lake just prior to count week.).

-2 Arctic terns were seen at Cattleland slough, north of Strathmore.

-Red-necked Phalaropes more numerous than Wilson's (709 > 569).

-Short-billed Dowitchers (record number) more numerous than Long-billed (12 > 1).

-Record number of Loggerhead Shrikes (8).

-Record number of Pacific/Winter Wrens (10).

-Record number of Brown Thrasher (10).

-Cape May Warbler continued in the high teens (18) for the 3rd successive year.

-(A possible but uncertain Black-headed Grosbeak was reported by Terry Korolyk from Area 25).

-Pine Siskins at a near record low (3); such a low number has not been recorded since 1993.

-Paul Turbitt reported a Lewis's Woodpecker seen SW of Turner Valley (Area 27) prior to Count Week and a pair in the area all summer raising a family, one of the few breeding records for the province, and the 4th year the species has been present during the count.

Other species seen during count week:

-5 Trumpeter Swans at Glenmore Reservoir May 28 (Deanna Campbell on Albertabird).

-1 Nelson's Sparrow at Horse Creek Road marshes, May 26 (James Telford, Jessica Klawunn on eBird).

Participants, by Area, and some comments

The extent of the areas listed below can be found in the 2013 report:

<http://www.naturecalgary.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Calgary-May-Species-Count-2013-Pt-A-v8.pdf>

City of Calgary

Area 1: FCPP: 37 Street (Shannon Terrace) to Bridge 6 (W end of Fish Creek Provincial Park)

Trevor Churchill, John Stegeman

Area 2: FCPP: Bridge 6 East to Macleod Trail (Votier's Flats)

Gus Yaki, Wayne Walker, Aileen Pelzer; Marie-Paule Caron Daze; Brenda Cherrington; Ron and Karen Chow; Peter Comfort; Marie Coultis; Margo Glover; Sue Konopnicki; Bianka Koszler; Colleen Liefer; Joe Novecoskey; Steven Spring; Carole Steeves; Diane Stinson; David Vernon; Marje Wing.

Area 3: FCPP: Macleod Trail to Bridge 13 (Glennfield): covered for the first time in many years.

Deanna Downton-Jullyan, Anne Belton, Helen Hebb, Penny Borrowman. They reported big changes in this area due to last year's flood; Wood ducks breeding on old heronry wetland pond.

Area 4: FCPP: Burnsmead/Hull's Wood to Lafarge Meadows

Dan Arndt

Area 5: FCPP: Mallard Point to Burnsmead

Jim St. Laurent, Joy Ely, Kumiko Kamiike

New Area 5a: Bow River: Pine Creek Waste Treatment Plant to 194 Ave SE

Bob Lefebvre, Joy Ely, Dave Campbell, Lorraine Campbell

Area 6: Carburn Park to Beaverdam Flats Park

Joan & Wayne Walker, Dave Vernon, Carole Hachey, Lorrie & John Anderson, Sue Konopnicki, Marjorie Wing. They reported substantial changes to terrain, ground cover and to the river channel due to June 2013 flood.

Area 7: Pearce Estate Park, this year including Bow R west to Point MacKay.

Hank VanderPol, Peter Roxburgh.

Lots of young geese & ducks are not included in the numbers here.

Inglewood Bird Sanctuary was closed and inaccessible due to 2013 flood damage. In previous years, Inglewood (IBS) has been a significant contributor to the number of small passerine species reported in the city, largely due to the reports from the Bird Banding Society.

New Area 7a: Elbow River (7 St/12 Ave to Bow River) & Bow River (Fort Calgary to Weir).

There is believed to be no overlap with numbers reported from Pearce Estate Park.

Melanie Seneviratne, Rose Painter, David Vernon

Area 8: Glenmore Reservoir, Park and Weaselhead

South Glenmore Park: Bernie Diebolt, Steven Spring, Phyllis Roberts, and others not reported;

North Glenmore Park: Dan Arndt, Ruth Painter, and others

Additionally Rodger Titman reported 2 Surf Scoters (in eBird).

Area 9: Bowness Park, Baker Park, Al Azhar property, Tuscany Pond, to Bearspaw Dam.

Gary Malcolm, Joseph Dylke, Zerind Malcom-Teleky, Tivan Malcom-Teleky. Bowness Park itself was closed and inaccessible due to 2013 flood damage.

Area 10: Bowmont Natural Area

Mike Bentley, Dan Parliament, Cindy Parliament.

Certain parts of Bowmont Park were inaccessible due to 2013 flood damage.

Area 11: Lowery Gardens/Edworthy Park

Ena Spalding, John Bargman

Very little bird song, feels too early, leaves not out on balsam poplars (for the 2nd time in more than 20 years)

Area 41: Griffith Woods

Howard Heffler, Darren Batke, Tony Timmons

Area 42: Southeast Calgary – East of Bow River, Shepard, Ralph Klein Park

Mike Mulligan, Sid Andrews, Aaron Alford

Area 43: Areas of Calgary: casual observations, areas usually not assigned.

Reader Rock Garden / Elbow River from Stampede - Lindsay Park to 25 Ave: Melanie Seneviratne, Rose Painter, David Vernon

Nose Hill Park (W end and periphery): Nicole Pellerin, Simone Pellerin-Wood

Confederation Park & Queen's Park Cemetery: Melanie Seneviratne, Ken Burton, Elizabeth Delong, Marianne Chase. Most of the smaller birds were heard and not seen; maximum numbers from 2 days were reported to avoid duplication.

Confluence Park - West Nose Creek: Lorrie & John Anderson; they reported that the trails were busy with dog walkers, runners & bicycles. Amy Darling & Ken Burton covered the North-South area parallel to Deerfoot Trail.

Monterey Park: Lorrie & John Anderson. Highlight was 4 Sora. This new park has ponds, sedges and trees with the potential to produce interesting birds, and there is a string of stormwater ponds S to Peigan Trail that often have many ducks and gulls.

Area (43) (cont'd):

NE Calgary area – around 144 Ave & 36 St NE: Lorrie & John Anderson
Rose Painter reported Red-necked Grebes nesting at Lake Bonavista; Eric Tull reported a Peregrine Falcon at its usual location at the University of Calgary; Carol Coulter reported (on AlbertaBird) a Townsend's Solitaire in Southview.

Foothills Areas

Area 12: Springbank Area

Ena Spalding, John Bargman. This year was quiet – not much singing; too much water for most shorebirds.

Area 14: Water Valley North

Brian Elder, Ray Woods, Zacke Svensson counted the northern, main portion;
Highway 40 (Forestry Trunk Road) was covered by Hank VanderPol, starting at 4:50 am to avoid traffic and catch the early birds.

Area 15: Water Valley South

Andrew Slater. Unusually, no magpies or Ruffed Grouse were detected.

Area 16: Cochrane

Most of the species reported are from Horse Creek Road, reported by Andrew Slater; with additional information from Andrew Keaveney (eBird); Sprague's Pipit and 2 Bobolinks were reported by Brian Elder, Ray Woods and Zacke Svensson; the assigned observers replacing retiree Frank Hennessey have not reported.

Area 17: Bow Valley PP and Exshaw

Tim Allison and Mark Rubensohn

Area 18: Kananaskis Country: Highway 40 Corridor & Mt. Lorette

Tim Allison, Nicole Pellerin; Bill Wilson reported from E of Kananaskis River and south of Resort area (only largest numbers reported here to avoid duplication)

Area 19: Sibbald Flats, Trail

Mike Bentley, Laura Bentley, Darlene Shymkiw. Snow near road in mountains, a very late spring.

Area 20: Elbow River Basin

Lenora Flynn, Dick Flynn, Jerry Pilny
Extreme flood damage in certain areas from previous year.

Area 21: Gorge Creek Road

Colin Young, Linda Bailey. This year a black bear which we are beginning to think is standard for our walk on the closed section of the road appeared as we were leaving Link Meadows, ie between us and our car, but behaved impeccably and ran off immediately as we yelled.

Area 22: Millarville/Threepoint Creek Area

Terry Korolyk. Trees not completely exfoliated; Terry reports that he may have heard a Bobolink singing 1.1 kms into the route.

Area 23: Priddis Area

Gus Yaki, Aileen Pelzer; Nimali Seneviratne, Anne Elliott; Rob English; Phil Smith; Julie Thomas.

Area 24: Brown/Lowery Provincial Park

Colin Young, Linda Bailey.

Area 25: South of Calgary

Terry Korolyk. Some birds yet to have arrived on the breeding grounds; Terry reported what may have been a BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK in the aspen canopy near a ranch on 144 Street south of Calgary, in a deep valley near the Cross Conservancy.

Area 26: Upper (North) Sheep River Basin

Michael Harrison. Fairly quiet year. Vegetation seemed on schedule.

Area 27: South side, Sheep River Basin

Colin Young, Linda Bailey. The nesting Lewis's Woodpeckers were reported by Paul Turbitt.

Area 28: Highwood River Basin west of Longview

Bob Lefebvre

Area 29: Central Highwood River Basin

Eric Tull and Brooke Clibbon, augmented by an 11-minute count on May 25 at Emmerson Lake in High River by Greg Wagner (from eBird). Eric and Brooke kindly took on this count at the last minute, on their brief stop between Qatar and Vancouver Island - Thanks.

Prairie Areas**Area 13. Crossfield - Didsbury**

Bernie Diebolt, Janet Gill, Joerg Gueldenpfennig

Area 30: Didsbury East Bluebird Trail

Don Stiles, Phil Stiles. Lots of water, therefore lots of birds, a record number of species; especially waterfowl; CCSP & CHSP in migrating flocks; Bank Swallows on R262 just S of Hwy 583 (T320); most Cliff Swallows under bridge over Kneehills Ck on T314; Red-necked Phalarope (and significant numbers of other birds) at Keiver's Lake.

Area 31: Irricana

Not reported in 2014.

Area 32: Strathmore North

Kingsley Blades. 1 snow goose with 6 Canada Geese; 2 continuing ARCTIC TERNS were still being reported at the Cattleland Feedlot slough north of Strathmore, on May 25 by Steve Knight and Gerald Romanchuk (from AlbertaBird).

Area 33: East of Calgary, Weed Lake to Bruce Lake

Ken and Chris Havard.

This year there were some additional observations from localities in the far west of the area, not normally covered by Ken and Chris.

John & Lorrie Anderson reported from the SE corner, Hwy 564 & 84 St NE, and from McDonald Lake near Balzac, both the SE and the SW access areas. They provided lots of good information on best access for future years, and the state of construction, including a drilling rig, and rapid loss of some wetland habitat to development.

Linda Graf (on eBird) reported 4 Rusty Blackbirds on Hwy 791 at Inverlake Road, May 25. Although this observation was not otherwise confirmed, there were several other occurrences in the area in May this year, including one on May 26 at Eagle Lake (also eBird).

Area 34: Carseland/Dalemead/Langdon Reservoir

Howard Heffler, Lyn Heffler, Al Borgardt, Tony Timmons

Area 35: South of Strathmore

Lenora Flynn, Dick Flynn, Jerry Pilny. Limited access at Stobart Lake due to locked cattle gate.

Area 36: Frank Lake and High River East

Ian Halladay, Bruce Barnetson, Dave Gibson, Don Magnusson reported from Blizzard Lake, Second Lake, Third Lake, Blackie, Frank Lake (basins 3,2, and 1). Greg Wagner walked the dike and adjacent areas, and reported observations from Basins 2,3, and 4. Greg and Ian coordinated their reporting to avoid duplication. Two GHO are included in May 25 column. White-faced Ibis exceeded 500 this year.

Area 37: Acme/Carbon

Jean Dunn, Pat Mitchell. A new bird for the area – a Short-eared Owl, but NO COYOTES, no Richardson's Ground Squirrels.

Area 38: Mckinnon Flats

Andrew Hart

Area 39: South and East of Frank Lake to circle perimeter.

Rob Worona.

Area 40: West of Airdrie

Jim St. Laurent, Sam Williams; the Sandhill Crane was reported to me by Suzan Moore.